

### What Is Claimed:

1. A method of managing output, said method comprising the steps of:

    permitting a plurality of members to communicate with a further member which is a provider;

    initiating, by a plurality of traders, output by said provider;

    projecting demand of said members;

    combining demand projected by said members; and

    modifying output by said provider based on combined projected demand.

2. A method of planning a business objective, said method including the steps of:

    providing a structure which identifies a plurality of resources, said structure relating a quantity of at least one of said resources to a period of time;

    permitting a plurality of traders to have access to a portion of said structure, each of said traders belonging to at least one of a plurality of members, each of said members belonging to at least one of a plurality of communities; and

    retrieving data which relates to said structure.

3. A method of managing output, said method comprising the steps of:

    providing a demand structure for use by a provider to determine an output requirement, said provider being a member belonging to a community;

    communicating with said provider by updating a portion of said demand structure, such that each of a plurality of members transmits data relative to a respective demand for a specified period of time to said demand structure; and

retrieving data from said demand structure such that said provider can determine said output requirement for a time interval.

4. A method of planning a business objective, said method including the steps of:

permitting a plurality of traders to update a portion of a structure which identifies a plurality of resources, said structure relating a quantity of at least one of said resources to a period of time;

initiating an output of at least one of said resources based on said updated structure;

projecting a demand of said plurality of said resources for each of said plurality of traders based on said updated structure;

combining said demand of each of said plurality of traders based on said updated structure; and

modifying said output of at least one of said resources based on said combined demand.

5. A method of managing output, said method comprising the steps of:

permitting a first plurality of members to communicate with a second plurality of members, said second plurality of members being providers;

initiating, by a plurality of traders, output by said providers;

projecting demand of said first plurality of members;

combining demand projected by said first plurality of members; and

modifying output by said providers based on said combined projected demand.

6. A method of planning a business objective, said method including the steps of:

providing a structure which identifies a plurality of resources, said structure relating a quantity of at least one of said resources to a period of

time, said structure being used by a plurality of providers to determine output requirements, said providers being members;

permitting a plurality of traders to have access to a portion of said structure, said traders updating said portion of said structure based on their supply requirements, each of said traders belonging to at least one of a plurality of members, each of said members belonging to at least one of a plurality of communities; and

retrieving data which relates to said structure by said plurality of providers.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein each of said plurality of members communicate with said provider by transmitting data relative to a respective projected demand to said provider.
8. The method of claim 1 wherein said demand of said members is selected from the group consisting of production demand, payment demand, personnel demand, shipping demand and sales demand.
9. The method of claim 1 wherein said output is selected from the group consisting of product output, payment output, personnel output, shipping output and sales output.
10. The method of claim 2 wherein said plurality of resources includes at least one of production resources, payment resources, personnel resources, shipping resources and sales resources.
11. The method of claim 2 wherein each of said plurality of traders updates a respective portion of said structure to include a respective supply of said at least one of said plurality of resources.
12. The method of claim 2 wherein each of said plurality of traders updates a respective portion of said structure to include a respective demand of said at least one of said plurality of resources.
13. The method of claim 2 wherein said portion of said structure that each of said plurality of traders is given access to is related to an identity of each of said plurality of traders.
14. The method of claim 3 wherein said demand of said members is selected from the group consisting of production demand, payment demand, personnel demand, shipping demand and sales demand.



25. The method of claim 6 wherein each of said plurality of traders updates a respective portion of said structure to include a respective supply of said at least one of said plurality of resources.

26. The method of claim 6 wherein each of said plurality of traders updates a respective portion of said structure to include a respective demand of said at least one of said plurality of resources.

27. The method of claim 6 wherein said portion of said structure that each of said plurality of traders is given access to is related to an identity of each of said plurality of traders.

28. An article of manufacture comprising a computer usable medium having computer readable program code means embodied therein for managing output, said computer readable program code means in said article of manufacture comprising computer readable program code means for causing a computer to effect:

    permitting a plurality of members to communicate with a further member which is a provider;

    initiating, by a plurality of traders, output by said provider;

    projecting demand of said members;

    combining demand projected by said members; and

    modifying output by said provider based on combined projected demand.

29. An article of manufacture comprising a computer usable medium having computer readable program code means embodied therein for planning a business objective, said computer readable program code means in said article of manufacture comprising computer readable program code means for causing a computer to effect a method of completing said business objective, said method including the steps of:

    providing a structure which identifies a plurality of resources, said structure relating a quantity of at least one of said resources to a period of time;

    permitting a plurality of traders to have access to a portion of said structure, each of said traders belonging to at least one of a plurality of

members, each of said members belonging to at least one of a plurality of communities; and

retrieving data which relates to said structure.

30. A computer program product comprising a computer usable medium having computer readable program code means embodied therein for managing output, said computer readable program code means in said computer program product comprising computer readable program code means for causing a computer to effect:

providing a structure which identifies a plurality of resources, said structure relating a quantity of at least one of said resources to a period of time;

permitting a plurality of traders to have access to a portion of said structure, each of said traders belonging to at least one of a plurality of members, each of said members belonging to at least one of a plurality of communities; and

retrieving data which relates to said structure.

31. A computer program product comprising a computer usable medium having computer readable program code means embodied therein for planning a business objective, said computer readable program code means in said computer program product comprising computer readable program code means for causing a computer to effect a method of completing said business objective, said method including the steps of:

providing a structure which identifies a plurality of resources, said structure relating a quantity of at least one of said resources to a period of time;

permitting a plurality of traders to have access to a portion of said structure, each of said traders belonging to at least one of a plurality of members, each of said members belonging to at least one of a plurality of communities; and

retrieving data which relates to said structure.

32. A data storage unit for managing output, said data storage unit comprising:

communication means by which a plurality of members communicate with a further member which is a provider;

output means by which said provider may initiate output;

projection means for projecting demand of said members; and

an arithmetic unit for combining demand of said members.

33. A data storage unit for managing output, said data storage unit comprising:

a data structure which identifies a plurality of resources, said structure relating a quantity of at least one of said resources to a period of time; and

communication means for permitting a plurality of traders to have access to a portion of said structure, each of said traders belonging to at least one of a plurality of members, each of said members belonging to at least one of a plurality of communities.

34. A data storage unit for managing output, said data storage unit comprising:

a demand structure for use by a provider to determine an output requirement, said provider being a member belonging to a community; and

communication means by which a plurality of members may update a portion of said demand structure, said portion of said demand structure relating a respective demand of each of said members to a specified period of time.

35. A data storage unit for managing output, said data storage unit comprising:

a data structure which identifies a plurality of resources, said data structure relating a quantity of at least one of said plurality of resources to a period of time, said data structure being partitioned into a plurality of portions such that a respective plurality of traders may update each of said portions;

output means by which output of at least one of said resources may be initiated;

projection means for projecting demand of said plurality of traders;  
and

arithmetic means for combining said demand of said plurality of traders.

output means by which output of at least one of said resources may be initiated;